

Jonah's Ministry

Jonah 3

November 16, 2014

Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.) gave the circumference of the city as approximately sixty miles, and thus many have maintained that the three days referred to the journey around the walls. Modern archaeology has shown, however, that the inner wall had a length of almost eight miles. Today defenders of the historicity of the book interpret the statement as referring to "Greater Nineveh," i.e., the administrative district of Nineveh, which Parrot (p. 17) calls "the Assyrian triangle."¹

The Second Time

Jonah's Message

Commenting on this Mackay says:

It is not the message that they both bring that Jesus refers to, but himself and Jonah as persons. Although 'will' in 'so also will the Son of Man be to this generation' (Luke 11:30) might be a logical future, it is more convincing to take it as a real future, referring to something that Jesus was not yet at the time of speaking, but would be thereafter. What he and Jonah had supremely in common was that both would undergo a death-experience connected with God's judgment on sin, and both would have a miraculous deliverance from death by the power of God. That would constitute the sign to be given to their generation.²

Mackay continues:

It is thus the case that when Jonah preached in Nineveh, we are not to think of him as only uttering the words, 'Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overturned.' The main

¹ Ellison, H. L. "A. Jonah's Proclamation (3:1-9)" In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 7*. 380. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, © 1985.

² John L. Mackay: *Jonah, Focus on the Bible Series*, Christian Focus, 2008, p51

theme of his message was God's impending judgment on sin, so as to stir up the Ninevites to the gravity of their situation. But he also informed them about his own experience of the consequences of disobeying God, and of how God's power can save from even the most extreme circumstances.³

Ninevite's Response

King's Hope

God Relents

Ferguson said:

At this point many scholars raise an objection once again to the whole idea that Jonah is an historical narrative. 'How', they ask, can a revival have possibly taken place in Nineveh when we find no record of it, and within a few generations the Ninevites had overrun the people of God? If a revival had taken place, they argue, it would be quite impossible for these later events to have taken place.

This is a serious objection. But it is one that lacks spiritual and historical perspective. Take the United Kingdom; take Wales, or Northern Ireland, or Scotland. Within a similar period of time these small countries have witnessed remarkable revivals of religion, with no less remarkable occurrences than in Nineveh. But it is not long before these are but memories of the past. Within a few generations little is remembered within communities once visited by the power of God.

³ ibid

People who experience mighty revivals may be all the more hardened against God in the generations that follow. The presence of the Spirit of God is a far more delicate matter than we are prone to imagine. We need have no hesitation in believing that a revival of the magnitude described in Jonah chapter 3 really took place in Nineveh.⁴

Home Study Guide

Monday: Read Jonah 3 Review your sermon notes. What was Jonah's message?

Tuesday: Ezra 9 Why was Ezra so distressed? What did he do about it?

Wednesday: Nehemiah 8-9 What was the response to the reading of the Law? How ought we respond?

Sunday's Sermon will be "Jonah's Anger" Jonah 4

Thursday: 2 Cor 12 Why was Paul concerned about their anger?

Friday: Eph 4 Why did Paul want them to get rid of anger?

Saturday: James 1 What is the problem with our anger?

Memory: James 1:19-20

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Prayer Items:

⁴ Sinclair Ferguson, Man Overboard, Banner of Truth, 2014, p59

Family Catechism Study

[Westminster Shorter Catechism]

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongeth to everyone in their several places and relations. Matt. 15:4-6; Rom. 13:8

God desires us to show respect for everybody in their various social positions. He forbids us from doing anything, which detracts from their respect. Read the account of Paul dealing with the high Priest [See Acts 23:1-5] or God's dealings with those who were disrespectful to his servant. [See Num. 16:41-50] As we can see from these instances, and there are many more, that God is serious about honor and respect: his own, those he has placed in authority, his servants, and in general, the way we deal with everyone.

We seem to have difficulty getting beyond our national dogma of equality and rarely see anyone as our superior. God, on the other hand, has established order in the universe and in human relationships. This commandment clearly states how we are to regard our superiors. The remainder of biblical case law demonstrates that the command does not just apply to fathers and mothers but decency in all relationships: family, government, community, church, etc.

We need to work on our own hearts in this regard. We need to help one another to obey this command. We owe this obedience to God since we are his people. Did not God show us the ultimate respect by giving his Son as our sacrifice for sin? Jesus our Superior laid down his life (the act of ultimate deference) thereby honoring us and making us acceptable and honorable before his Father.

Respect others - for God has already respected you - to the death!